

REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

EDUCATION & FAMILIES

TEACHER RESOURCE



IAGO WESTERN EDGE YOUTH THEATRE



CREATIVE
VICTORIA



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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created to provide teachers and students with some preliminary ideas as to how to extend their experience of *IAGO* beyond the stage and into the classroom. The activities are designed to be open-ended and multi-ability. They may need differentiation for your specific group of students.

The performances and workshops included in the Education & Families program are designed to offer students engaging performing arts experiences with strong links to the Victorian Curriculum and to VCE subjects where appropriate. Each Education & Families performance varies in its content and as a result the scope for integration across the curriculum varies. Please feel free to contact the Education and Families team on [\(03\) 9644 1808](tel:0396441808) or at education@rav.net.au if you have any questions about this resource, its content or its implementation within your classroom!

ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

Regional Arts Victoria inspires art across the state. Through creative facilitation, touring, education, specialised resources, artistic projects and advocacy, we develop and sustain creative communities and artistic practice all over Victoria.

Regional Arts Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation working in long-term partnerships with every level of government, fostering contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice across five decades. We advise and impact on decision-making across multiple portfolios and levels of government.

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations, and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria.

Our artistic program

Regional Arts Victoria inspires creative communities, creative places and creative catalysts.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES	CREATIVE PLACES	CREATIVE CATALYSTS
Regional Arts Victoria stimulates and connects our state's communities of practice.	Regional Arts Victoria champions the places where art is made, experienced and discussed.	Regional Arts Victoria fosters current and next generation creative capacity and practice.
Members and membership services: fostering active and engaged artists and arts organisations across the state; supporting arts professionalism through specialised resources and professional insurance Resources, workshops and events program of forums and activities through our Regional Cultural Partnerships Program Networks: hosting specialised state-wide and national networks (including Regional Cultural Network, Festivals Network, Arts Teachers); participating actively in regional development networks; accessing and developing New Networks at membership and organisational level Strategic partnerships with governments, universities, tourism, planning and development bodies as well as arts and cultural organisations	Performing Arts Touring: opportunities, tools and support for regional and remote touring across Victoria and Australia Education & Families: performances, workshops and projects in schools, accompanied by AusVELS aligned teacher resources State-wide place-making projects including – <i>Home is where the hall is:</i> November's month-long celebration of arts events in regional community halls <i>Eco-Cubby:</i> promoting the principles of sustainable design and architecture in schools, hands-on <i>Small Town Transformations:</i> innovative projects of significant local and regional impact, combined with state-wide thought leadership on "How can art transform your town?"	Advocacy and leadership: leading state-wide arts conversations; creating exposure for regional artists; providing strategic advice Creative Leadership Program: annual program for emerging arts and thought leaders Creative Arts Facilitators: our regional staff team work directly with artists and communities, in close partnership with local and federal government Access and diversity including Indigenous engagement and cultural exchange Grants programs: facilitating and supporting high quality applications to quick response, presentation and project grants, administered on behalf of state and federal government

EDUCATION & FAMILIES TEAM

Regional Arts Victoria's Education & Families team pride ourselves on providing relevant and exciting activities for children and young people that are complementary to both Victorian and Australian curriculums. All of our tours come with a free set of education resources to further enrich your arts experience.

Our team is available to provide local contacts and links to research, and offer advice on how to make the most of the arts at your school or centre. Our office is a resource for Victorian teachers, so we encourage you to make use of us!

We also provide significant subsidy assistance (up to 50% of program costs) to eligible remote and disadvantaged schools. Your school may be eligible so please contact us to find out more!



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VICTORIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

Learning Areas	Capabilities
<p>The Arts, Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn as artist and as audience • Students learn through making and responding. • The elements of drama • Principle of narrative • Viewpoints/perspectives 	<p>Critical and creative thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions and possibilities • Reasoning • Meta-cognition <p>Ethical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about world views • Challenge and contest • Develop ethical capability
<p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing, speaking, listening, reading • Literacy • The study of texts 	<p>Intercultural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on and challenge assumptions and Stereotypes • Changing attitudes and believes <p>Personal and social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition and expression of emotions • Appreciation of diversity



INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

About The Production of *Iago*

Iago is a timely and well-crafted response to a complex and pressing social issue that makes young people feel positive about themselves and helps them build respectful relationships. The work is well-researched through consultations with teachers and educators. It is highly responsible in its messaging as well as being engaging, funny and flexible enough to allow young people to respond in a variety of ways without feeling judged. The work successfully explores male issues without stigmatizing or alienating young men and presenting positive models of masculinity.

This performance is for young people in Years 10 -12 and directly addresses the issue of male violence against women and promotes respectful relationships. The performance is based on a contemporary, modern language adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Othello' and is set in a rat-infested boxing gym. The characters in this work are reinvented and embrace the backgrounds of the culturally diverse cast members. Told through physical theatre and fast poetic dialogue, *Iago* is woven with issues including misogyny, male violence, raunch culture and pornography – it's an in-ner-face contemporary theatre reworking and was presented at The Coopers Malthouse in 2015 to critical acclaim.

"Whilst still identifiably Shakespeare, it is the cast's work and their interpretation of these complex themes; the characters are translated into their own cultural backgrounds. While being loosely driven by Shakespeare's narrative, the audience is transported into a contemporary Australian context." Dr Dave Kelman, WEYA Artistic Director

IAGO AND OTHELLO

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the play revolves around four central characters: Othello, a Christian Moorish general (note that in Shakespeare's time Moors were people from Africa, black skinned and often Muslim) in the Venetian army, his beloved wife, Desdemona, his loyal lieutenant, Cassio and his trusted but ultimately unfaithful ensign, Iago. It concerns varied and enduring themes of racism, love, jealousy, betrayal, revenge and repentance. In Shakespeare's play, the key characters are:

- Othello - Othello is a Christian Moor (African), a general of the armies of Venice, a hero, in love with Desdemona (they secretly marry)
- Desdemona - Daughter of the Venetian senator Brabantio, determined and self-possessed
- Iago - Othello's 'ensign' or 'standard-bearer', the villain of the play, plots Othello's downfall, a manipulator, obsessive, cruel and calculating
- Emilia - Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant. A cynical, worldly woman, she is deeply attached to her mistress and distrustful of her husband
- Cassio - Othello's lieutenant, devoted to Othello. Used by Iago to manipulate Othello
- Bianca - A courtesan or prostitute. Her favourite customer is Cassio
- Brabantio - Desdemona's father, a Venetian senator, as a friend of Othello he feels betrayed when he learns Othello married his daughter in secret

In *Iago* the setting is a boxing gym owned by Brabant. The characters to an extent mirror those from *Othello* in that they represent ideas of power and ambition, become entwined in relationships but they are also very contemporary. The characters in *Iago* are (in order of appearance):

Brabant -	The owner of the boxing club and gym, father to Desdemona
Iago -	An aspiring, manipulative and very ambitious young boxer
Emilia -	In a relationship with Iago, works at the gym
Desdemona -	A university student, friend to Iago and Emilia, daughter to Brabant, in love with Othello
Othello -	The 'number one' boxer, The Samoan Cyclone, in love with Desdemona, manipulated by Iago
Bianca -	Friend to Desdemona and Emilia, alone in the world
Cassio -	An aspiring boxer, works at the gym, manipulated by Iago, tries to seduce Desdemona

QUESTIONS:

- What similarities do you see between the characters in Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, and the those in the production of *Iago*?
- What similarities do you see between the setting of *Othello* and the setting of *Iago*?



THE STORY AND PURPOSE OF IAGO AS A THEATRE PERFORMANCE

The following extract from an interview with the Artistic Director of Western Edge Youth Arts offers some insights into the story and purpose of *Iago*.

What inspired you to put on this play, as well as the style that it's in?

This work comes out of an ensemble devising process. The plot is highly relevant to contemporary issues and the style is a 'poor theatre' physical approach that best suits the needs of this company.

What sort of vision; artistic or otherwise, do you have for this play? What do you hope your audience will get out of it?

Iago is a contemporary re-working of Shakespeare's *Othello*. It explores misogyny and male violence and is sensitive to current social trends. I hope audience will be entertained, challenged and moved by it.

Why do you think people and actors still love performing and showcasing Shakespeare's work to this day? What is it about these particular characters that you love, or that you think other people will love and/or relate to?

Iago is an original play uses Shakespeare's dramaturgy and characters but not his poetic language. Shakespeare's plays explore moral ambiguity through the genius of his writing – they continue to be relevant and entertaining which is why they are so widely performed and appreciated today.

Does the play reflect any of your personal experience, current or past? If so, has it helped you develop as a person or come to terms with your experiences (gender/sexual identity)?

Many people in the community have experienced male violence against women in one form or another. This play does draw on the personal experiences of the cast at some level – it also explores diverse cultural perspectives – but it is not in any way autobiographical.

Source:

http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=11115#sthash.70VjrZYZ.dpuf

EXCERPT FROM A REVIEW OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION OF IAGO

Told through physical theatre and fast poetic dialogue, Western Edge Youth Arts presents the premiere of *IAGO* – a contemporary reworking of one of Shakespeare’s greatest plays at The Coopers Malthouse for a strictly limited season: 7 – 9 May 2015.

Woven with issues including misogyny, male violence, raunch culture and pornography, *IAGO* is an in-your-face contemporary theatre reworking of Shakespeare’s *Othello* re-imagined inside the confines of a rat-infested boxing gym and spliced with young people’s stories reflecting the cultural diversity of Australian society.

The Edge Ensemble comprises six young emerging artists and in *IAGO* the characters represent their own diverse cultural backgrounds, including Piper Huynh (Vietnamese), Achai Deng (Sudanese), Legrand Andersen (Maori), Rex Pelman (Samoan), Natalie Lucic (Croatian) and Oti Wiloughby (Ghanaian)

Western Edge Youth Arts artistic director, Dave Kelman, explains that *IAGO* genuinely belongs to the Edge Ensemble: “Whilst still identifiably Shakespeare, it is the cast’s work and their interpretation of these complex themes,” says Kelman.

“The characters they have created are intersected into their own cultural backgrounds while being loosely driven by Shakespeare’s narrative as the audience is transposed into a contemporary Australian context.”

IAGO aims to explore the problematic world of contemporary sexual politics and misogyny incorporating a number of different cultural perspectives.

Source: <http://artsreview.com.au/iago/>



Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA)

Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) is a non-profit organisation established to provide positive arts and performance experiences to young people from different cultural and social backgrounds living in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Projects are managed in community contexts and in schools projects.

Western Edge Youth Arts specialises in providing high quality multi-arts programs to culturally diverse and disadvantaged young people. We are one of the leading youth art organisations in Australia and our work is on the cutting edge of international youth art practice. We have been running youth arts programs since 1993 and have a proven track record in the production of innovative, lively, complex and beautiful works that stand up as artistically excellent within the broader arts context. All of our work is subject to rigorous evaluation and research, and these findings are regularly disseminated via conference presentations, research reports, refereed journal publications and our own high traffic website.

WEYA celebrates cultural and linguistic diversity, and through the communicative power of artwork and performance, works with young people to enhance their artistic, communicative and problem solving skills. The acquisition of these skills empowers young people educationally and socially. As they grow in respect for themselves and others, they become ambassadors for a socially just and harmonious society.

DAVE KELMAN, Artistic Director of WEYA

Dave Kelman has worked for the past thirty years as a director, writer, researcher and drama educator in Melbourne Australia and Leeds UK. As Artistic Director of Western Edge Youth Arts (2006 to present), he has directed widely acclaimed, community youth theatre work and an innovative artists-in-schools program.

Major Community and Education Works: Recent stand out work for Western Edge includes: *Fate* (2013), a music/theatre performance for the Big West Festival and *Black Face White Mask*, which performed in a sell-out season at The Malthouse in 2012.

Performer/Writer: He has toured nationally with his own award-winning Theatre-in-Education Company *Dog Theatre* (1996-99, *Buckley's Chance Drama Victoria* – 'Best School's Show' 1998) through Nexus Arts and pioneered hip-hop theatre in UK – *Union City* (1995) for the Yorkshire Dance Centre, and in Australia, *Casino City* (1996) for Footscray Community Arts Centre.

Lecturer and Researcher: Kelman is currently a regular lecturer in arts education at the University of Melbourne. His research has been widely published in refereed books and journals and he was a keynote speaker at the 2010 International Drama and Theatre in Education Congress in Brazil. He was awarded a PhD in Drama Education at the University of Melbourne (2009).

PERFORMERS BIOGRAPHIES

Rex Pelman (OTHELLO) is a performer, sound designer, community theatre facilitator, member of the Edge Ensemble and music producer. He joined Western Edge in 2010 as a Year 9 student on the three-year Chronicles project, for which he interviewed both the oldest person in the remote Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community in Western Australia and his Western Samoan mum in Deer Park. Rex played the lead in the epic Scheherazade performance in 2014, devised and performed in Random, and Boxed with the AAVE Collective, among others. He is also a member of the Massive hip-hop choir and is working on their second album.

Natalie Lucic (DESDEMONA) born in Werribee on the day her parents opened a local pizza shop, Natalie grew up around people (as well as pizza) and loves to make people laugh. She joined the Edge Ensemble in 2014 and debuted as writer, director and performer in David & Daisy at La Mama the same year. It's her third season running at La Mama, also starring in Wonderland and Manonita through Moving Theatre and Platform Youth Theatre. She teaches acting to Year 9 students in Flemington, runs workshops, and was the body double for Missy Higgins in her 'Hello Hello' film clip.

Piper Huynh (EMILIA) is a community theatre practitioner, actor, facilitator and communications whizz who recently returned from Manila, where she co-facilitated Playback Theatre workshops for local artists. She has previously toured the Kimberley with Western Edge Youth Arts' three-year Chronicles project. Her theatre credits include Iago, Scheherazade, Nightmareville, Pre-Paradise Sorry Now, Fate and Fate 2.0, Talon Salon – Home and Chaste. A cinematographer and photographer, she is a member of the Edge Ensemble and Playback West, co-founded the AAVE Collective, has worked as an art director and film production assistant, and acted in a short for Victorian Legal Aid. She assisted on Hello, Goodbye & Happy Birthday at the Malthouse and is part of the St Martins Artist Mentorship Program.

Achai Deng (BIANCA) is soul singer, rapper, dancer and emerging actor, whose open creativity and ability to connect has led her into fruitful collaborations in Australia and Uganda. She auditioned for Western Edge's Edge Ensemble in 2014 after a friend posted about the opportunity on Facebook. She brought energy and poise to her supporting lead roles in two major 2014 productions – Iago and Scheherazade. Achai has particularly enjoyed the teamwork aspect of her involvement with the Edge Ensemble, the opportunity to learn while creating with a great group of fellow artists. Born in Sudan and raised in Kenya, Achai is currently completing a Diploma of International Business and Marketing, and aspires to work with the UNHCR as a mentor to refugees.

Oti Wiloughby (CASSIO & BRABANT) is a performer, youth facilitator and musician with international releases under the moniker Yaw Faso. He joined Western Edge in Year 8, performing in Rhythm of the Streets, Random and Transit, and collaborated with Massive to produce Fate. He went on to join the Massive crew as well, and works as a facilitator in schools and communities. As a member of the Edge Ensemble he appeared in Scheherazade and Iago in 2014, which runs again at the Malthouse in 2015. He is studying a dual diploma in community development and community services work at Victoria University.

Legrand Anderson (IAGO) joined Western Edge Youth Arts as a teenager and quickly became a youth mentor, facilitator and performer. As a member of the Flemington Theatre Group he helped to write and produce Black Face White Mask and Zamunda, which they put on for Melbourne Fringe. As a member of the Edge Ensemble he worked with the hip hop crew Massive to produce Fate for the Big West Festival, and played the lead role in Iago for two seasons. He was awarded Emerging Community Leader of the Year by Maribyrnong City Council in 2010 for organising youth events with FreeZA, Western Edge and White Ribbon.

...she survives. The whole way through, you think “how much more can she take?” But she makes it. In the end, she is free. And she’s helped her family, helped pretty much everyone she’s met, and she’s lived this full, true life; brutal and harrowing and true...
Emilia, *Iago*



SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. Who is IAGO?

Iago is a character in Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello*. He is considered a consummate villain. Read the following descriptions:

Driven by an overpowering lust for evil rivaled only by Satan, Iago grabs the title as worst Shakespeare villain hands down. On the surface, Iago's motive for wanting to destroy Othello could be one of several. The most obvious is that he has just been passed over for a promotion which has gone to Cassio. He confesses to Roderigo that this is the reason for his hatred; the reason for his desire to ruin Othello.

AND

Iago is one of Shakespeare's most sinister villains, often considered so because of the trust that Othello places in him. Iago betrays Othello while maintaining his reputation of honesty and dedication. Shakespeare contrasts Iago's evil with Othello's nobility and integrity. Shakespeare gave Iago more lines in the play than Othello himself.

Iago is a Machiavellian (where he believes that the means justifies the end) schemer and manipulator. He is often referred to in the play as "honest Iago", displaying his skill at deceiving others so that not only don't they suspect him, but they count on him as being highly truthful.

QUESTIONS:

- What are the key words used here to describe Iago?
- How do you imagine the character will be portrayed?
- What might drive a person to be so manipulative and ambitious?
- Are there any historic or contemporary public figures you know who have been revealed to be so ambitious and manipulative?
- What is the role of a VILLAIN in a story?
- What famous film, television or literary villains do you know?
- Can a reader or audience sympathise with villains?

1. Live theatre and the structure of *Iago*

Iago is a live theatre performance consisting of an ensemble of six young actors. It

- What do you know about theatre?
- What is the difference between live theatre and film?
- What previous productions have you seen?
- Where have you seen them?
- What do you think is the difference between seeing a play in a theatre or venue and seeing one in a classroom?
- What is an 'ensemble' of actors?

Iago is structured as a series of scenes and monologues, interspersed with ensemble work including movement. Some of the language is poetic or rap like, borrowing from Shakespeare's verse, and sometimes it uses straight dialogue. The story is linear. What does this mean? It means we enter the characters' lives at a particular point and we leave them at particular point. In between we are presented with the story of the play.

BIANCA: You need to learn the word “respect”.

DESDEMONA: He needs to learn the word “respect”.

BIANCA: Be honest with yourself. It’s only been a few months. How’s it gonna be in a few years? How’s it gonna be once he sees he can do whatever he wants. And you’ll still be trying to please him?



2. The metaphor of boxing

Iago uses the metaphor of boxing and locates the story in a boxing club where the characters physically, verbally and emotionally 'spar' in order to try and make sense of their lives. Below is a quote about boxing:

*There is something painful and dark about boxing that I just don't see in other sports. Many fighters come up from the poorest dire situations...and boxing puts us in a **gut-wrenching, heartbreaking, bone-crushing** kind of place at times. It publicly exposes our bodies and our **vulnerabilities**. It requires both **the basest human physical violence** as well as a **sharp acumen**, along with **truckloads of courage and heart**. Boxing is both **brutal and graceful, painful and glorious, terrible and triumphant**...perhaps it names something viscerally true and primal about **the experience of being human**, and that's why it gives us so much language for our lives - Lisa Creech Bledsoe, professional boxer*

Source:

<http://www.theglowingedge.com/boxing-gives-us-more-metaphor-for-our-lives-than-any-other-sport/>

QUESTIONS:

- Discuss the sport of boxing.
- Is boxing an international/global sport? Do all cultures box?
- Discuss some of the words used in the quotation above – how do they relate to 'the experience of being human'?
- Why do you think the creative team chose boxing as a metaphor?
- **Revisit this quote** after you have seen the production and see what links you can make between some of these words and the play if any.

3. Cultural Identity – what's yours?

A key part of *Iago* is the insight it provides into the lives of the six characters and their cultural identities. The actors in the production identify as having Vietnamese, Sudanese, Maori, Samoan, Croatian and Ghanaian backgrounds. In *Iago*, some of the characters speak about their family

- How might a person's cultural background or identity impact living in Australia?
- For instance; differing values and beliefs, parental expectations, roles with a family?
- How would you describe your own cultural identity? Were you born in Australia? If not how did your family come to be here?
- If you were, what do you know about your family's origins

4. Other key themes

Australian of the Year 2015, Rosie Batty, an advocate for action against domestic violence after her son Luke was killed by his father, said the following:

I wanted to take [domestic violence] from being a topic that was discussed behind closed doors, and make it a topic that we discussed openly...so that men are much more aware of the consequences of disrespecting women. And how disrespecting women is unacceptable

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-24/rosie-batty-australian-of-the-year/7108064>

IAGO aims to explore the problematic world of **contemporary sexual politics, violence against women** and **misogyny** incorporating a number of different cultural perspectives

- What do each of the bolded terms above mean?
- In what contexts have you heard them?
- Discuss the words that Rosie Batty uses. What do they suggest about gender roles?

5. Playing with the form - Drama

The gym
Waifs and strays
Looking for better days
We love and hate
The gym

Fat and thin,
Lean and trim
Smells of sweat and skin
The gym

Noise and din
Pay to win
The place where I fit in
The gym

This text is the opening lines to the play, *Iago*. Read and discuss the text – what is it saying?

Working in small groups of between 3-6, use the text to create a short ensemble performance.

You may like to consider:

- Using movement
 - Using call and response
 - Chanting and repetition
 - Rhythm
 - Allocating lines to specific people
 - Giving the delivery and representation of the text some meaning and significance
- Perform your work and discuss the various interpretations

When you watch the performance see how the ensemble for *Iago* have interpreted it



SUGGESTED POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. Responses to the production

Now that you have seen the production what are your thoughts and feelings about it? The following questions are posed to get you thinking about its form, its content and its ideas.

- In pairs tell each other the story of *Iago* – what happened?
- Where was it set and how do you know; what indicated that setting?
- Which characters do you remember most strongly and why?
- Did you sympathise with any characters? Why?
- What costumes did the characters wear?
- Did the costumes make sense in the world of the play?
- What other costumes could have been worn?
- How did the performers use their expressive skills – voice, gesture, movement, facial expression – to create their characters?
- One actor plays two roles – Cassio and Brabant – how did he achieve that?
- If you could play one of the characters which one?
- What is one idea explored in the play that you found compelling?
- What was the play ‘saying’?
- What do you think happens afterwards to these characters?
- If you could change anything in the play what would you change?

2. Theatrical form

Iago is non-naturalism. It uses physical theatre, poetic language, movement and ensemble work to create the world and the story of the play. The Artistic Director of Western Edge Youth Arts also describes the production of *Iago* as ‘poor theatre’.

Iago is written to be performed in a ‘Poor Theatre’ style based on the work of Polish Theatre practitioner and theorist Jerzy Grotowski (*Towards A Poor Theatre*) This involves the paring back of the in-essential – props, costumes, lights.

Grotowski says:

The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of the art form.

An ascetic theatre in which the actors and audience are all that is left. All the other visual elements are constructed by means of the actor’s body, the acoustic and musical effects by his voice. Since our theatre consists only of actors and audience, we make special demands on both parties. Even though we cannot educate the audience – not systematically, at least – we can educate the actor. The actor is a man who works in public with his body, offering it publically.

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth, of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our usual ideas about theatre

Source: http://www.caac.es/docms/txts/grottos_txt01eng.pdf

- Discuss how the production of *Iago* used the form of ‘poor theatre’. Was it effective?
- How does the use of poor theatre as a form set up ‘symbol’ and ‘representation’?
- If you were to add more elaborate set, props and costumes what would you add and why?

STAGE DIRECTIONS FROM THE SCRIPT

Read the following two stage directions from the script
How were these two moments created in the performance?

A movement sequence to show the routine of the gym repeating over and over again; time passing.

DESDEMONA musters a smile for her Dad. He gets up and goes back to what he was doing. DESDEMONA exhales. DESDEMONA watches her father. Her imagination races. We see her imaginings of everything BRABANT did in the war. [MOVEMENT SEQUENCE]



3. Gender Roles in IAGO

IAGO explores the stories of contemporary young men and women. What does it mean to be a man or a woman? Look at this extract from a poem about being a man from the play.

WHAT IS A MAN?

CASSIO, OTHELLO AND IAGO in the gym

ALL What is he?
OTHELLO Muscles
IAGO Muscles, Toughness
CASSIO Roughness, and all that shit
ALL What is he?
CASSIO He's... he... ahhh...
IAGO This is hard
OTHELLO He's a caretaker.
CASSIO/OTHELLO A provider
IAGO He carries the heavy load
ALL He is a human.
OTHELLO He's an authority, he claims authority
CASSIO/IAGO Not all men claim authority.
ASSIO And that's not a bad thing
IAGO Some men get stepped on
CASSIO They let someone else take the lead.
ALL I think a man...

OTHELLO (simultaneous) To be a man is to face your demons.
IAGO(simultaneous) To be a man is to fuck your bitches.
IAGO [playful] What?
OTHELLO And come out stronger.

- What are the different voices represented here saying about **masculinity**?
- What do you think it means to be **a man** in contemporary Australia?

This is not who I am, this is not who I am. My fist against her face, her beautiful face,
bones crumpling from the force. This is not who I am

Othello, *Iago*

Look at Desdemona's monologue from the end of the play.

DESDEMONA [not angry; calm]

How should I play the victim? How would you like me to be?

Should I cry? Should I come to you with red eyes?

Or should I scream? Should I scream the heart out of my chest?

Or maybe you'd rather I was silent.

Should I go into hiding?

Should I tuck my laughter and my smiles into a drawer for an appropriate length of time?

Walk around like he's standing on my shoulders,

Walk around like I'm walking through quick-sand.

Should I sink? Is that it?

Because that would be easy. That would be so easy.

That would be so easy.

But it wouldn't be me.

Everything heals.

If it didn't, imagine the state we'd be in.

When we get cut, we don't bleed dry.

The colours of bruises sink back in to the skin in no time.

I'm not fine, it bloody hurts,

But it will heal. And in the meantime

I've got shit to do.

This wasn't my fault, and I'm not gonna act the part.

I'll heal on my time, however I like.

- How is she responding to what happened to her?
- Discuss how you might respond
- Discuss the relationship between the poem about masculinity and Desdemona's monologue

Activity:

- Write your own poem or brief monologue about contemporary masculinity or what it means to be a women in Australia in 2016
- Perform or read these to each other
- What ideas are present?
- What is common and what is different?



4. Themes and ideas in the play – Violence against women

Discuss how the following scene was depicted in the play

Othello bashes Cassio as Iago holds him by the arms

•
DESDEMONA Stop it! Stop it Othello! You'll kill him! Cassio.

OTHELLO I told you not to say his name again. I told you, you slut, I told you. [He grabs her] You fucking- you slut, you-

EMILIA and BIANCA enter.

DESDEMONA Stop Othello! Get off me, you're- [Screams]

Othello punches her. He stands horrified at what he has done.

EMILIA Desdemona!

Why is violence against women such a problem in contemporary Australia?

In small groups discuss this question.

- How did the play explore it?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about it?
- Is there mutual respect between genders in your school?
- How are men and women depicted in advertising and the media ie on billboards, in magazines, online?
- If you agree that violence against women is a problem what solutions are there?



FURTHER READING

Regional Arts Victoria: www.rav.net.au

Western Edge Youth Arts: <http://westernedge.org.au/>

The Line: <http://www.theline.org.au/respect>

Respectful Relationships Education:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/respectfulrel.pdf>

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